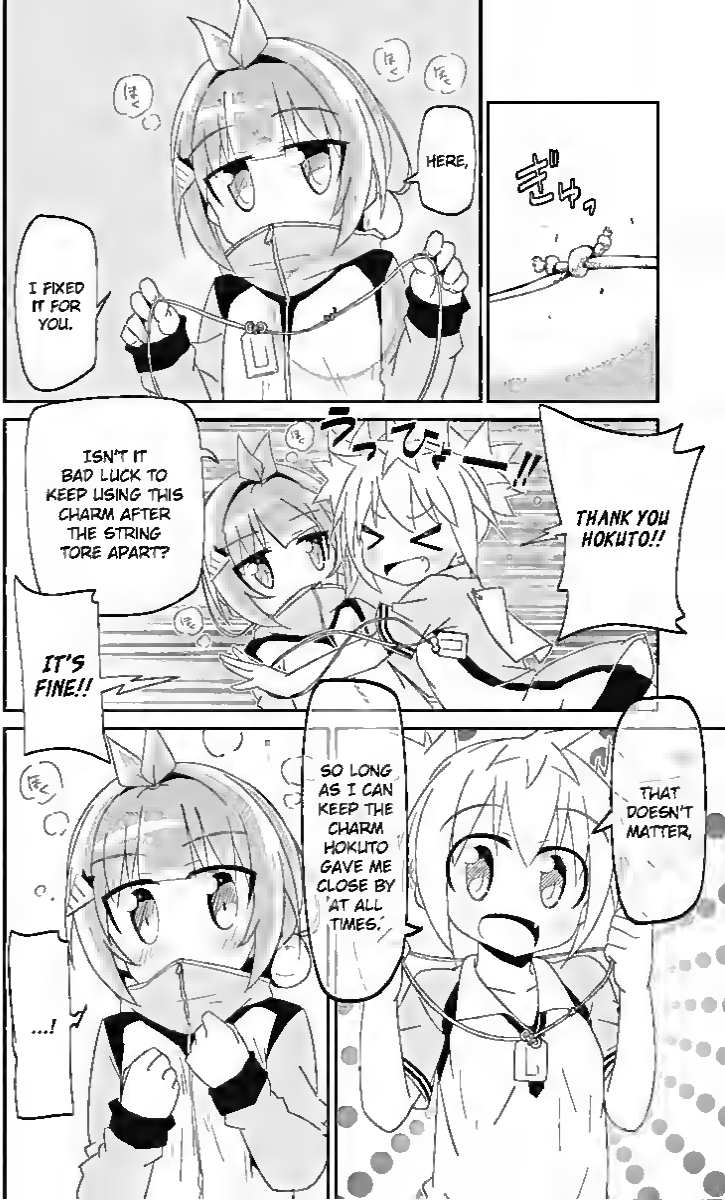
CHAPTER 11 『THE PLACE WHERE I CAN FEEL AT EASE』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ほん
HERE,
I FIXED IT FOR YOU.
きゅっ
ラッピー!!
THANK YOU HOKUTO!!
ISN'T IT BAD LUCK TO KEEP USING THIS CHARM AFTER THE STRING TORE APART?
IT'S FINE!!
ほん
THAT DOESN'T MATTER,
SO LONG AS I CAN KEEP THE CHARM HOKUTO GAVE ME CLOSE BY AT ALL TIMES.
...!

SENPAI'S MATCH IS ABOUT TO BEGIN.
THAT'S ENOUGH FOOLING AROUND...
STOP THAT, YOU'RE PRICKLING ME...
Aw, you're so cold!
THE DOUBLES MATCH ALWAYS SEEMS TO COME AT A CRUCIAL POINT, HUH?
THE SCORE IS EVEN NOW
1
1
WE CAN'T DROP THE BALL HERE!
MORE THAN ANYTHING, THE FEELINGS YOU GUYS ENTRUSTED TO US—
7'11"

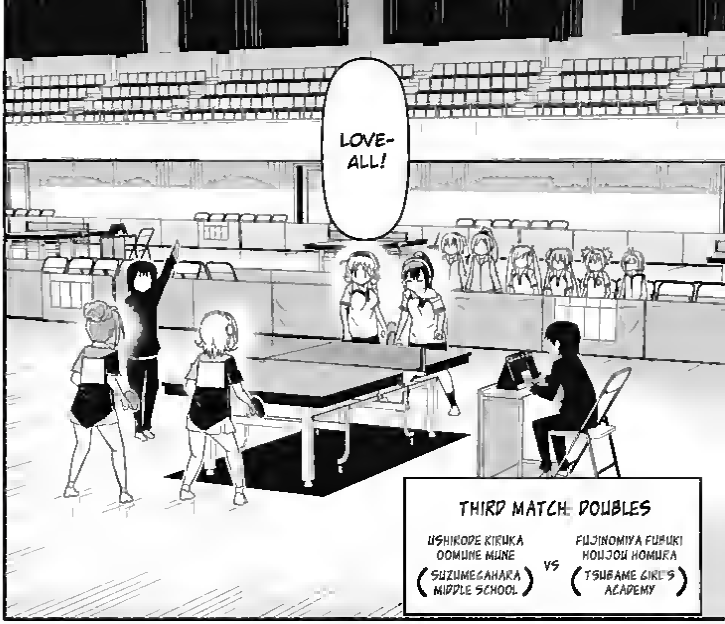
GOOD LUCK, MUNE-MUNE-SENPAI!
GO GET 'EM, CAPTAIN!!
WE'RE NOT LETTING THEM GO TO WASTE!

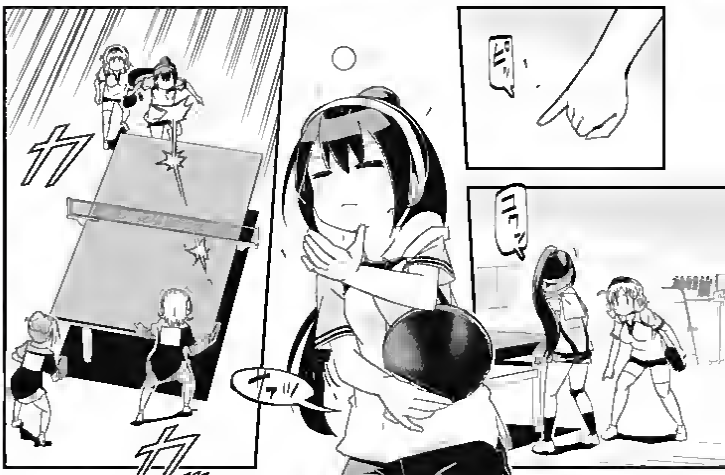
SUZUME-GAHARA'S DOUBLES TEAM, USHIRODE AND OOMUNE
THEIR DEBUT WAS AT LAST YEAR'S SUMMER TOURNA-MENT.
THEY'VE BEEN ABSENT EVER SINCE DUE TO USHIRODE-SAN'S INJURY, MAKING THIS THEIR SECOND OFFICIAL APPEARANCE

THIS MATCH IS NOT GOING TO BE EASY.
AT THEIR DEBUT MATCH, THEY HELPED THEIR TEAM REACH THE CITY'S TOP 8
EVEN THOUGH THEIR TEAM WAS ELIMINATED, THE TWO OF THEM CAME OUT COMPLETELY UNDEFEATED FROM EIGHT MATCHES.
...
COMPLETELY UNDEFEATED...
BUT THAT'S ALL IN THE PAST.
USHIRODE-SAN HAS BEEN IDLE FOR A LONG TIME
GIVEN SUCH A HANDICAP ...

...right?
THERE'S NO WAY OUR SCHOOL'S PAIR WILL LOSE THIS MATCH.
POKE POKE
HAW!
LEAVE IT TO US!
PAT PAT
YES!
LET'S SHOW THEM
GOOD LUCK!
FIGHT!
THE MEANING OF COMBINATION!!

JAN, KEN, PON.
WE'LL SERVE FIRST THEN.
I DON'T CARE IF YOU WON 8 MATCHES IN A ROW.
TODAY, VICTORY IS OURS
BRING IT ON!!
7


LOVE-ALL!
THIRD MATCH: DOUBLES
USHIKODE KIKUKA
OOMUNE MUNE
(SUZUMEGAHARA MIDDLE SCHOOL)
VS
FUJINOMIYA FUBUKI
HOUJOU HOMURA
(TSUBAME GIRL'S ACADEMY)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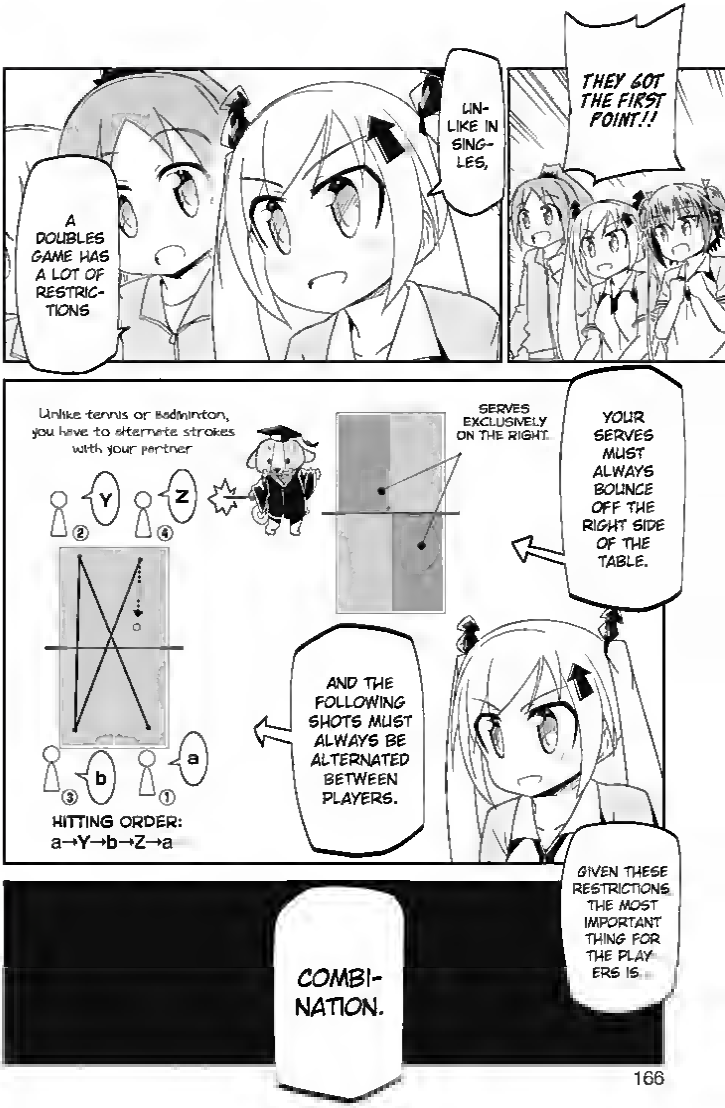
キュッ
キュッ
宝糸
(KIKUKA-MUNEMUNE)
1-0
(HOMURA-FUBUKI)
コ!!


A DOUBLES GAME HAS A LOT OF RESTRIC-TIONS
UN-LIKE IN SING-LES,
THEY GOT THE FIRST POINT!!
Unlike tennis or badminton, you have to alternate strokes with your partner
Y
Z
②
④
SERVES EXCLUSIVELY ON THE RIGHT.
YOUR SERVES MUST ALWAYS BOUNCE OFF THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE TABLE.
AND THE FOLLOWING SHOTS MUST ALWAYS BE ALTERNATED BETWEEN PLAYERS.
b
a
③
①
HITTING ORDER:
a→Y→b→Z→a
GIVEN THESE RESTRICTIONS, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR THE PLAY-ERS IS...
COMBI-NATION.

YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE LEAVING AN EASY SHOT FOR YOUR PARTNER.
THEN QUICKLY STEP ASIDE
SO THAT YOU DON'T GET IN THEIR WAY.
IT'S IMPORTANT TO ALWAYS PLAY WITH YOUR PARTNER IN MIND.

THE PAIR WITH THE BEST COMBI-NATION

CON-
TROLS
THE
MATCH!
KIRUKA-
MUNEMUNE
2 - 0
NOMURA-
FUBUKI
THEY'RE
GOOD AS
EXPEC-
TED.
IT'S NOT
GOING TO BE
AN EASY WIN
YEAH
...

THAT GIRL'S BREASTS ARE HUGE!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WAIT!
MY SIDES ARE SENSI-TIVE!
HOW ABOUT YOU START TAKING THIS SERIOUSLY?
AHAHA AHA... SORRY! SORRY!
POKE
HAW!
I'LL BE COUNTING ON YOU, HOMURA
ARE YOU SURE?
BUT WE CAN STILL BEAT THEM
PAT
PAT

I LEARNED A COUPLE OF THINGS SEEING THEM PLAY AGAINST OTHER SCHOOLS AND WATCHING THIS MATCH.
USHIRODE-SAN IS A CHOPPER WHO PLAYS MOSTLY ON THE DEFENSIVE
BOOBIES PLAYS WITH POWERFUL STRIKES AND WILL ACTIVELY SEEK AN OPPORTUNITY TO ATTACK

USHIRODE-SAN CREATES THOSE OPPORTUNITIES AND BOOBIES FINISHES IT OFF, THAT'S THEIR BASIC PLAY STYLE.
BOOBIES'S REAL THREAT IS HER POWER SHOTS. HOWEVER...
SHE'S ALSO WEAK ON ALL OTHER FRONTS. SO LONG AS WE KEEP HER FROM ATTACKING, THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
Sorry
No prob

AH, HOW BORING.
ON THE OTHER HAND, USHIRODE-SAN GIVES US NO OPENINGS.

KIRUKA-MUNEMUNE
4 - 2
HOMURA-FUBUKI
ズ
ズ
ズ
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コ
THAT'S OUR CAPTAIN!!
SHE'S CUT OFF HER SHOT WITH HER CHOP!
NO, IT'S HARD TO EVEN GET THE BALL TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TABLE!!
ESPECIALLY THESE POWERFUL BACKSPIN CHOPS, I CAN'T LAND A STRONG SHOT AGAINST THEM.
THEREFORE
PAT
PAT
HAH!
POK
nod
nod
nod

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY FOR US TO BEAT THEM!
宝条
京女学園
藤
京東女
IT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO LAND A STRONG SHOT AGAINST USHIRODE-SAN'S CHOPS, BUT

I CAN JUST BARELY MANAGE TO PASS THE BALL FORWARD
SO WE CAN GET PAST USHI-RODE-SAN AND

LAND AN ATTACK
(HOMURA-FUBUKI)
5 - 4
(KIFUKA-MUNEMUNE)
AFTER BOOBIES'S TURN!

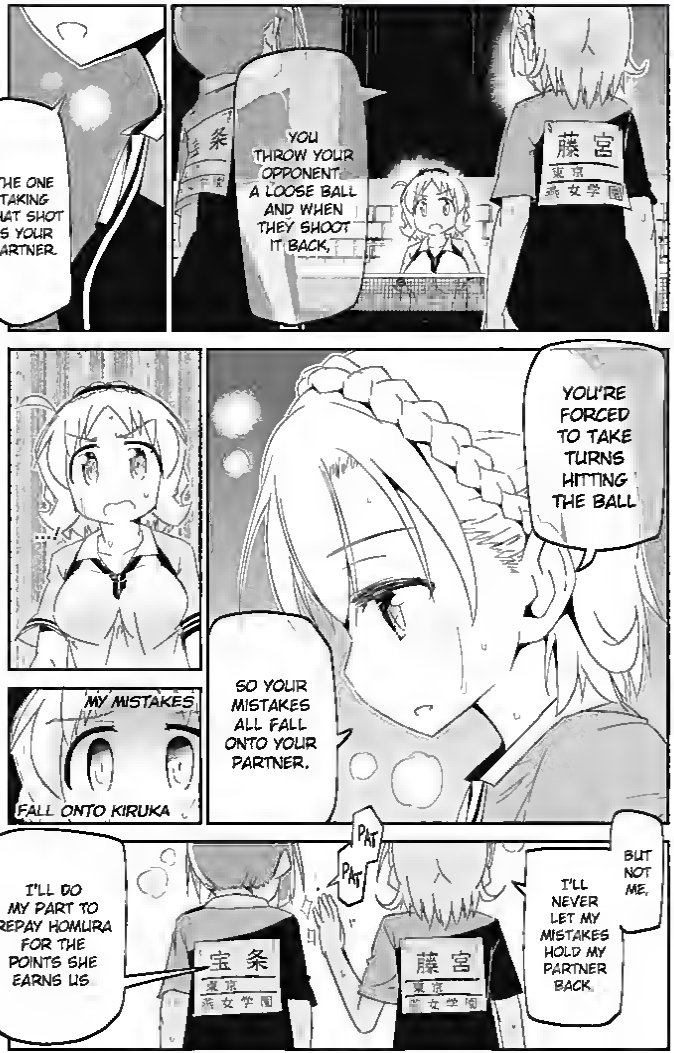
SO THE PLAN IS TO PLAY AGAINST BOOBIES.
I SEE! IT'S HARD TO RETURN A STRONG SHOT AFTER USHIRODE-SAN'S CHOP.
BUT IF THEY CAN JUST PASS THE BALL TO BOOBIES, SHE'LL GIVE THEM BACK A LOOSE RETURN!
..IS SIMPLE. RETURNING USHIRODE-SAN'S BALLS SHORT AND LOW SO THAT BOOBIES CAN'T LAND A POWERFUL HIT.
I JUST HAVE TO FOCUS ON CAREFULLY RETURNING THE BALL!
MY JOB..
MY JOB..

IS TAKING THE OPPORTUNITIES FUBUKI CREATES FOR ME AND
EARNING US THE POINTS!!
大京
SO WHAT IF YOU HAVE A REPUTATION AS A CHOPPER OF BEING LIKE AN IRON WALL?
MY SHOTS ARE THE MOST POWERFUL IN TSUBAME
カッ

AND AGAIN
I'LL JUST HIT YOU AGAIN
AND AGAIN
UNTIL YOU FALL APART!!

I CAN'T REACH HOUJOU-SAN'S SHOTS..
FUJINO-MIYA-SAN'S BALLS ARE TOO LOW, I CAN'T GET A GOOD HIT IN...
はあ
はあ
はあ
はあ
THESE TWO...
...ARE STRONG!
4 0 0 7
Suzume gahara
Tsubame
THEY LOST THE LEAD

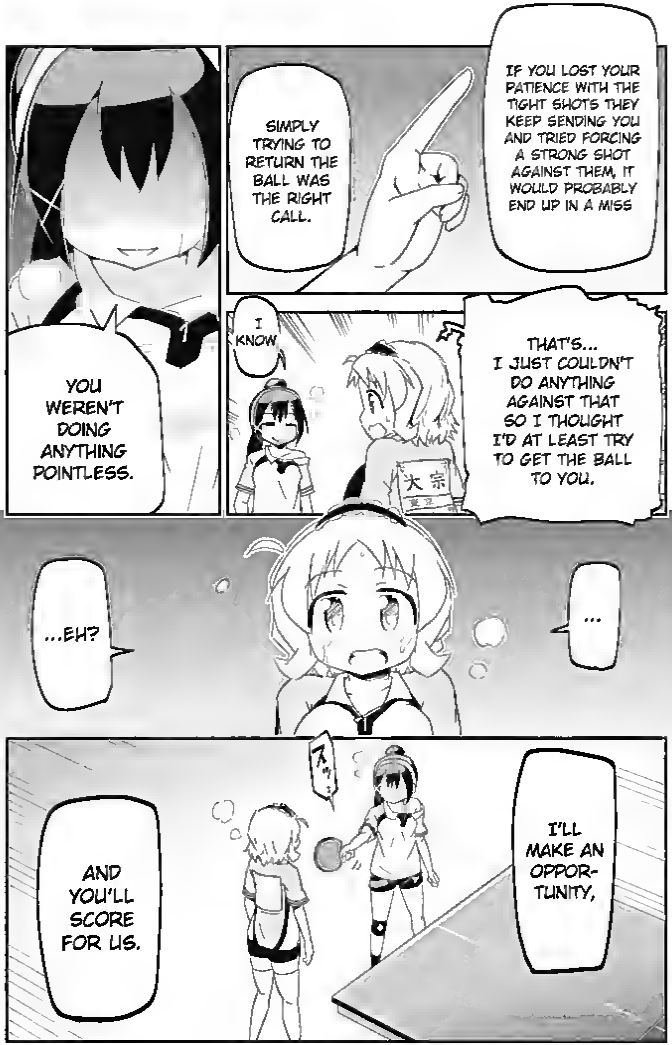
ISN'T THERE A WAY FOR MUNE-MUNE-SENPAI TO STRIKE BACK AT THEM?
I DON'T KNOW.
OF COURSE MUNEMUNE -SENPAI IS LOOKING FOR A CHANCE TO ATTACK,
BUT THE OPPONENT WON'T SHOW THEM A SINGLE OPENING.
FUBUKI -SENPAI EXCELS AT PLAYING OVER THE TABLE SURFACE AFTER ALL
there there
HEY! WHY ARE YOU PATTING MY HEAD AT A TIME LIKE THIS?!
THIS IS A LITTLE EMBARASSING, PLEASE STOP!
OF COURSE SHE'S GOING TO MAKE GREAT PASSES TO HER PARTNER...
DOUBLES ARE CRUEL, AREN'T THEY?


THE ONE TAKING THAT SHOT IS YOUR PARTNER.
YOU THROW YOUR OPPONENT A LOOSE BALL AND WHEN THEY SHOOT IT BACK,
藤宮
東京
燕女学園
...!
YOU'RE FORCED TO TAKE TURNS HITTING THE BALL
SO YOUR MISTAKES ALL FALL ONTO YOUR PARTNER.
MY MISTAKES
FALL ONTO KIRUKA
PAT
PAT
I'LL DO MY PART TO REPAY HOMURA FOR THE POINTS SHE EARNS US
宝条
東京
燕女学園
藤宮
東京
燕女学園
BUT NOT ME.
I'LL NEVER LET MY MISTAKES HOLD MY PARTNER BACK.

I'M NOT GIVING YOU A SINGLE CHANCE TO ATTACK US
MARK MY WORDS!
IT'S NOT QUITE LIKE THAT FOR ME.

後手
IF I MESS UP, MY PARTNER'S GOT MY BACK COVERED.
SHE SUPPORTS ME THROUGH THE HARDSHIPS
WHEN PLAYING DOUBLES, I CAN FEEL AT EASE.
THANKS TO THAT, I CAN FULLY IMMERSE MYSELF IN THE GAME AND GIVE IT MY ALL.
THIS KIND OF FUN IS SOMETHING YOU DON'T GET FROM SINGLES.
BRACE YOURSELVES,
WE'RE NOT DONE YET.

WE'LL PULL AN ATTACK OPPORTUNITY OUT OF YOU,
MARK MY WORDS!
FINE.
BRING IT ON.
...
I'M SORRY, KIRUKA...
ALL THE PRESSURE IS FALLING ONTO YOU BECAUSE OF MY BAD RETURNS
YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG
TUG
TUG


YOU WEREN'T DOING ANYTHING POINTLESS.
SIMPLY TRYING TO RETURN THE BALL WAS THE RIGHT CALL.
IF YOU LOST YOUR PATIENCE WITH THE TIGHT SHOTS THEY KEEP SENDING YOU AND TRIED FORCING A STRONG SHOT AGAINST THEM, IT WOULD PROBABLY END UP IN A MISS
I KNOW.
THAT'S... I JUST COULDN'T DO ANYTHING AGAINST THAT SO I THOUGHT I'D AT LEAST TRY TO GET THE BALL TO YOU.
...EH?
...
AND YOU'LL SCORE FOR US.
I'LL MAKE AN OPPOR-TUNITY,

LET'S SHOW THEM
OUR OWN BRAND
OF TABLE TENNIS!!

KIRUKA!!
TAP
RIGHT!!
THE PIECES...

ALL THAT'S LEFT
IS FINDING THE RIGHT TIMING!!
...ARE ALL IN PLACE.
I CAN OVERCOME THEM IF MUNEMUNE IS BY MY SIDE.
NO MATTER WHAT TROUBLES LIE AHEAD,
IT'S OKAY
OUR TABLE TENNIS
IS INVINCIBLE!

THE CHAMPION IS USHIRODE KIRUKA-SAN!
1
2
3
TABLE TENNIS COMPETITION
I GOT FIRST PLACE!
MY LAST MUNICIPAL COMPET-ITION AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
I'LL BECOME NUMBER ONE AT MIDDLE SCHOOL TOO!
I WAS ALSO AT THE TOP OF THE TABLE TENNIS CLASSES I WENT TO...
LET'S SEE...
THAT DAY TWO YEARS AGO, I WAS EXTREMELY EXCITED ABOUT STARTING MIDDLE SCHOOL...

FIRST YEAR, CLASS 3 THE CLASSROOM IS AT THE THIRD FLOOR'S...
IT WAS AWESOME!!
THE COW WAS *THIIIS* BIG...
WAH-
AH...
I'M GOING TO DIE!!

ぽいーん‥
THAT'S WHEN
I FIRST MET MUNEMUNE.